

## VIEWPOINTS

### Continuing Professional Development: Don't Miss the Obvious

Kristin K. Janke, PhD

University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy, Twin Cities Campus

We have come a long way since I wrote my last Viewpoint on continuing professional development (CPD) in 2003.<sup>1</sup> The Accreditation Council for Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE) has added policy for Continuing Professional Development for CE Administrators.<sup>2</sup> In addition, criteria and guidelines for CPD for Faculty and Preceptors are enumerated in ACPE's Program Standards for the doctor of pharmacy (PharmD) degree.<sup>3</sup> Numerous organizations, including the American Pharmacists Association's (APhA), American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP), and American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP), have endorsed the concept through their policy processes. Pharmacy groups, such as Kaiser Permanente, are developing CPD processes for their pharmacists. In addition, in this issue of the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, the results are published from a 5-state CPD pilot program that investigated whether a structured educational intervention would support pharmacist learners' utilization of a CPD model when compared to control subjects.

Understandably, CPD efforts have been focused on practice. Questions are being debated and examined, such as "How can we facilitate CPD with the average practicing pharmacist?" While these deliberations and investigations are important, as academics we are missing our biggest area of influence - student pharmacists! By educating students on CPD, we can annually transition large cohorts of CPD-ready new practitioners to practice.

However, preparing CPD-ready new practitioners does not come without its challenges. Academics must align interests in self-directed learning and lifelong learning with the profession's current discussions on CPD. Then, we must support students in developing CPD skills while in school. In particular, faculty members must examine the concept of learning portfolios as a promising strategy for encouraging and documenting CPD. Finally, we need to work with boards of pharmacy to prepare processes to recognize CPD and support systems to facilitate it. If we accept these challenges, the end result will be a cadre of CPD experienced new practitioners transitioning to a CPD-friendly regulatory environment. These new practitioners can then experience the professional re-

wards and satisfaction associated with CPD, as well as assist with the dissemination of this concept in practices.

The profession has long been recognized for its involvement in lifelong learning. As schools and colleges interview candidates for admissions, prospective students comment on their attraction to the profession because they "love to learn." The prospect of continual learning is attractive to many. CPD is a means to operationalize lifelong learning. By explicitly teaching the CPD process, faculty members are handing students a set of essential tools. These essential tools will prepare student pharmacists to assume responsibility for developing and maintaining professional competency after graduation.

As academics, we have long discussed the need to develop self-directed learning skills in our students. We have called this a *general ability outcome* and attempted to weave it into our curricula. A curricular commitment to CPD would ensure that students have the opportunity to "move into the driver's seat" and begin taking responsibility for their own learning. With persistence and guidance, students can learn to: assess their learning needs, develop plans to address those needs, take action to implement those learning plans, evaluate their progress, and document their learning.

By starting early, with students in school, faculty members can teach the CPD process. During didactic education, basic competency can be developed through a succession of carefully planned workshops, exercises, and feedback sessions. Students can become more versed with self-assessment, reflection, and planning and documentation strategies.

Experiential learning is an ideal place to practice and reinforce CPD. Preceptors are our allies in this process. While each introductory and advanced pharmacy practice experience (IPPE and APPE) has specific objectives, preceptors are making decisions about learning activities on a minute-to-minute basis. Attend an inservice presentation or start work on a chart review? These decisions are often made with the best interest of the student in mind. However, if learning needs are documented and discussed, the decisions can be even more successful. The presence of a learning portfolio can aid in dialogue and planning.

As student pharmacists make their first attempts, coaching and support are critical. A learning portfolio can highlight learning progress and be shared regularly with instructors and preceptors as students progress through the curriculum. Learning portfolios are distinctly different from showcase portfolios where students share their best work, similar to an artist. Learning portfolios are also distinct from accountability portfolios that are designed to demonstrate student achievement of desired outcomes. The concept of learning portfolios holds promise due to the potential to facilitate CPD and simultaneously bring portfolios into curricula in a meaningful, focused manner. However, the structure of learning portfolios, the methods for construction and review, and the possible support mechanisms require further discussion and examination in academic pharmacy.

Partnerships between pharmacy schools/colleges and boards of pharmacy are also critical. Ideally, new graduates would transition to CPD-friendly regulatory environments that are able to recognize learning documented by continuing education (CE) credits or quality CPD methods. Pilot projects are likely needed to gain experience with training, documentation, and review processes.

With initial experiences accumulating, pharmacy needs additional support in expanding CPD. As options

for involvement are considered, faculty members can not miss the obvious. Our biggest opportunity to influence the next phase of CPD development is through work with our students. While challenges exist, colleges and schools can provide CPD-related education and experience within pharmacy curricula. By embracing this opportunity, a large cohort of CPD-ready new practitioners could transition into practice each year, systematically growing the numbers of pharmacists engaged in CPD and revitalizing learning throughout the profession.

## REFERENCES

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